

“ We are seeing a huge wave of popular struggles, and “Istanbul” and now “Sao Paulo,” are only the most recent examples. From the Occupy movements, to the Indignados, from Syntagma Square to Tahrir Square, the present crisis has spawned this wave, and its connection to the present economic crisis seems clear. The question, for me, is the relationship of such popular movements -- which are not worker’s struggles (and here I’m not speaking simply of traditional factories and blue-collar workers) arising from the sites of production - to communism; to putting capitalism and its social relations in question. Many of these movements began in opposition to dictatorship, authoritarian rule, corruption, the power of the 1%, the absence of “democracy.” In most, the fundamental social relations of capitalism, the value-form, have not been challenged. The danger is that political forces integral to capitalism can and will utilize popular struggles to avert any threat to capital; to block any movement directly linked to the point of production and its circuits. We have seen the Occupy movement in the US fade as activists mobilized for the Obama re-election campaign in 2012. We have seen the activists in Syntagma Square seek to replace the present Greek coalition with a Syriza government. We have seen the Muslim Brotherhood gain power in Egypt. And now we see the Turkish labor unions call a one-day general strike in opposition to Erdogan and his authoritarian regime, while the Social-Democratic Republican People’s party (Kemalist and nationalist) seeks to topple a “fascist” regime. I want to be clear: these social movements contain the possibility for communists to intervene, to attempt to make capital and not democracy the issue. But they also contain the grave danger that capital can utilize them for its own survival, and one of our tasks is to see that danger.” MacIntosh on MeltdownIII email list

“ ... The radicalism in the methods used should not make us forget that the Leninists in all their variations, as well as leftists, Council Communists ... and also the majority of anarchists cannot be situated outside of the framework of a society based on value and commodities, money and abstract labor. To the contrary, the work ethic was often brought to its climax by them. The left denounced the exploitation of labor and the conditions under which it took place. But it completely set aside the foundations of Marx’s theory: it is not the nature of human life, but the characteristic of capitalism alone, that social activity counts only, regardless of its content, as the simple expenditure of undifferentiated time — what Marx calls “abstract labor” — that this time constitutes a ghostly “value” and that it represents itself finally in money. Just as the “science” of bourgeois economics, the left in all its modes considered value and abstract labor, commodities and money, as eternal factors of social life - it was thus, for the left, only a matter of ensuring a “fairer” distribution of that value.

Similarly, industrial production and productivism were highly approved of by all the whole of the left 3 (with the only exceptions being a part of the anarchist movement, some artists, like the Surrealists, and thinkers such as William Morris). The identification of happiness with commodity consumption was little criticized by the left before the 1960s, and has remained marginal even after that. The gradual occupation of all areas of life by commodities and labor included the spread of human attitudes such as efficiency, speed, discipline, self-sacrifice into the domain of labor and the narcissistic conception its own role in life. The left often tirelessly welcomed all “modernization.” Briefly, anti-capitalist opposition of the twentieth century largely “alter-capitalist movements”: opposition immanent to capitalism and its core structures which fought over how best to manage the labor of society. The difference between “radicals” and “moderates” on the left concerned, then, the form of intervention rather than its content. Worker’s self-management of the factory, just as polluting and just as dependent on success in the market place, was its hallmark.

During the past several decades, environmentalism and feminism, “alternative” lifestyles, and more recently, movements like « no growth» have called into question the model of life propagated by industrial capitalism. But we know that the “revenge” of “artistic critique” over “social critique” 4 has also had, perverse effects: it assists in the restructuring of capitalism, by refocusing its critique so as to achieve a more flexible and individualized style of management, and remaining — albeit unintentionally, within a perspective

immanent to capitalism. But it is especially in the worship of the work-fetish that capitalism and its alleged opponents demonstrate their real membership in the same universe. Save for a few, and often incoherent exceptions, almost no one can imagine a society that is no longer based on the need to sell his labor-power to live - even if you can not find buyers anywhere..” Anselm Jappe.

Beehive collective- The True cost of Coal

